

THE NKUMU OF THE TUMBA

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inches long and two inches in width, numbering up to seven are brought and attached to the back of her *lombos* by folding them over it.¹ [596]

The first male child which was born to the *nkumu* before he acceded to the office is known as *Iyomi Nkoi*. If he has none, then the right to this name passes to the first male child to be born to his younger brothers. Any child born on the day that the *nkumu* is given his *montolo* is also called *Iyomi*; if a male he will be *Mola Iyomi*, if a female, *Mpembe Iyomi*.² These children must not see the *nkumu* until they are old enough to know his name and greet him properly, and so they are taken to some village other than the one in which he has his residence. When such children are considered old enough to take up residence in the village of the *nkumu* it is an occasion for revelry, a big dance, *nteko*, is held, and there is a feast. The child, *Iyomi*, is brought to the village of the *nkumu* with rejoicing, and this is a signal for everybody desiring to do so to help himself to anything belonging to the *nkumu*. Goats and fowls may be killed and eaten, sugar-cane rooted up, bananas, plantains, and other crops growing near by seized for food. Because of this custom the *nkumu* will take precautions and send his livestock, at least, off to some other village in order not to lose more than he can help.³ 852 624 [551]

The *nyemba*, the singer or singers, and the *ntotii*, the praisers already mentioned, remain with the *nkumu* during his period of seclusion. Added to these is *ntomba lokombi*, the bearer of the *lokombi*, a stringed instrument played with the fingers, similar to a bass viol in its general appearance. 624 533 534

Inside the *ipana* during the seclusion of the *nkumu*, few people have the right of entrance, but as one enters the *ebanga* where the daylight hours are spent, one finds the couch of the *nkumu* on the left and towards the rear. On the same side and towards the front are seated the *ntombe lokombi* and the *nyemba*. *Nsono's* couch is to the right of, and parallel to, that of the *nkumu*, but still to the left of the centre posts. To the right of her couch is the fire in the centre, and beyond the fire on the right side is a couch for the *maomi*, likewise somewhat to the rear, with a space in front for the *ntotii*. 624 342 352

The month's seclusion being completed, the *nkumu* prepares to buy the homage of the village. *Nsono* gets rid of her decorative colours, and assumes ordinary attire, becoming like any other of the wives, and is ready to take up all the usual duties of a wife, whether in the garden or at the house. The people are called to come and render to the *nkumu* their homage and praise. The men come to the *ipana*, are admitted to the presence of their *nkumu* and seat themselves on the bare earth with their legs wide apart and facing him. They then, without uttering a word, greet him in the 624 576

¹ The *lombos* is a belt which used to be worn by Tumba women encircling the buttocks, and this was used to attach their only garment, the *skem* among the Bonginda, this being a short loin cloth, or an *mpempe* among other groups, this being a woven cloth strip worn between the legs.

² When a new *nkumu* assumes office, one already in office will take this opportunity of getting more of his sons named *Iyomi*. He takes them to the *molembu* of the new *nkumu*, and having placed a bracelet of cowrie shells on the right wrist, and sometimes one on the right ankle, asks the member of the *molembu*

whose right it is to give away the *montolo* to name these sons *Maomi* (pl. of '*Iyomi*'). This man will then take such a son, and presenting him to the people introduce him by giving him a name, and following with praise as, '*Ow Iyomi Lonzie, boloto!*' and the crowd replies with the customary '*Bwaa!*' 624 [297]

³ It is well to remember that not every individual bearing names associated with the institution of the *nkumu* is directly concerned with it. With the practice of 'resurrecting' dead relatives by naming new-born children after them, such names as these become widespread. [557]